

## No Bare Hand Contact with Ready-to-Eat Food

Assembly Bill (AB) 1252 added Section 113961 to the California Retail Food Code (Cal Code), which prohibits food workers from touching ready-to-eat (RTE) foods with their bare hands, effective January 1, 2014. The Department of Public Health is implementing a phased enforcement of AB 1252. During 2014, the Department will note violations of the law on the inspection report, however, no points will be deducted from the score. The Department shall instead educate the operator on the new law. Beginning January 1, 2015, violations of this provision will result in points deducted from the inspection score.

The National Advisory Committee for Microbiological Criteria for Foods, which provides input to federal food safety officials, has identified three interventions that can be effective in preventing the transmission of foodborne viruses and bacteria in food facilities. The use of proper handwashing procedures, restricting ill food employees from working with food, and preventing bare hand contact with foods that are ready-to-eat can help prevent the spread of disease from employees to consumers through contaminated food.

Recent studies indicate that hand washing alone is not enough to prevent foodborne illnesses, and that food service employees are the source of contamination in more than two-thirds of the foodborne outbreaks reported in the United States with a bacterial or viral cause. Infected employees shed infectious organisms and can transfer them to the food they prepare when they do not practice proper hand washing. Food can also be contaminated from infectious organisms found in infected cuts, burns or boils in the hands of food service employees.

Since its inception, CalCode has promoted proper handwashing practices and exclusion of ill employees to prevent the spread of foodborne illnesses. Section 113961 now adds another layer of protection to the methods already used to prevent food contamination by establishing a requirement for no bare hand contact with RTE food.

### Exceptions to the No Bare Hand Contact with requirement

Food employees may have bare hand contact when washing fruits and vegetables, as specified in Section 113992 of CalCode or when RTE food is being added as an ingredient to a food that is to be cooked to the minimum temperature specified in law. There are very limited circumstances under which a variance may be considered to allow bare hand contact with RTE foods.

For more information, you may contact Environmental Health Consultative Services Program at (626) 430-5320.



### Useful Links:

- [Visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh)
- [Request for Variance Application](#)